



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Grand Canyon National Park
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023-0129

November 29, 2000

Dear Friend of the Grand Canyon:

Reference: Grand Canyon National Park Packages 6, 28, 47, 48, 53, 54

Subject: Comments on proposed North Rim projects (general scoping)

The National Park Service (NPS) is in the initial stages of planning for multiple projects on the North Rim. These projects are expected to start construction this fiscal year or the following fiscal year. All of these projects are needed to repair problems with existing infrastructure, to better protect natural and cultural resources, to provide a safer, more enjoyable visitor experience, or to enable park staff to complete their jobs more safely and effectively. They all are either specifically identified in or are consistent with the 1995 Grand Canyon National Park *General Management Plan*.

Environmental assessments will be prepared to facilitate the decision-making process for these projects. The projects are summarized below (listed in no particular order), along with a brief justification for why the work is needed, and are displayed on the attached map.

- 1. Rehabilitation of the North Rim water distribution system.** This project would replace approximately 14,500 linear feet of worn-out, leaky, undersized, and shallow water lines with new water pipes. New fire hydrants would also be installed.

There are many problems with the existing North Rim potable water distribution system. Many lines are old, are in poor condition, and are leaking (estimated at more than 11,000 gallons per day). Some pipes needed for the shoulder seasons are too shallow to protect against freezing. The water pressure in areas also is too low to safely operate fire sprinkler systems or even satisfy ordinary domestic needs.

- 2. Rehabilitation of the North Rim Campground and Relocation of the Lodge Road.** The campground portion of this project would re-surface the roads within the campground, relocate the entry road configuration, construct a new fee collection station and demolish the existing one, construct four campsite access spurs for tent camping, and construct a new parking area entry. The total amount of disturbance would be approximately 0.3 acres. These project components have been proposed to address the following concerns: campground roads are severely deteriorated and are causing soil compaction and erosion problems; The existing entry road configuration no longer efficiently accommodates the current volume of visitors. Vehicle stacking in front of the fee collection station frequently blocks vehicle

access to the nearby store; The existing configuration does not adequately provide for increased parking needs and easy vehicle exit from the campground; tent camping sites are not paved and are ill-defined, causing resource problems; the existing fee collection station is inadequately providing for the needs of the employees who work in it and the campground registration system.

The Lodge road portion of this project would change public access routes to the Lodge. Public traffic would be routed into the main parking area, allowing only service vehicles to park next to Grand Lodge. The terminus of the main road would be reconfigured to allow for tour buses to turn around and discharge and pickup guests. The main parking area would be reconfigured to allow for RV and bus parking. The existing road segment between the parking area and the lodge would be converted primarily to pedestrian use. These project components have been proposed to address the following concerns: The current configuration of the road to the lodge is causing traffic congestion and vehicle/pedestrian conflicts, diminishing the visitor experience and increasing safety concerns.

3. **Rehabilitation of the North Rim entrance station.** The historic entrance station has fallen into disrepair and needs to be rehabilitated. Facilities at the site also need to be upgraded to provide essential visitor services and to enable park staff to accomplish their jobs more effectively. In particular, the station has a very poor ventilation system, resulting in park staff breathing auto exhaust fumes. There are no permanent restrooms for staff or visitors. The single entrance lane creates long lines and delays park staff and visitors. The signs in the area are old and outdated. The Park has not yet developed a specific proposal for how best to address the needs for action listed above, but is considering options for repairing or replacing the existing building, reconfiguring the road and parking lot, replacing the entrance sign and gate and constructing a new restroom.
4. **Construction of a North Rim emergency services building.** A 4,193 square-foot building would consolidate all EMS operations into one location and replace several smaller buildings. It would house emergency vehicles and equipment, provide a temporary prisoner holding facility, and provide office space and a training room.

The existing fire station is too small for modern emergency vehicles and is not able to hold all emergency service equipment and supplies. Portions of the fire engine must be disassembled before it can be stored and then be reassembled before it can respond to a call, resulting in delayed response times. The existing building has safety problems due to inadequate ventilation of vehicle exhaust fumes and a lack of safeguards for keeping prisoners in the building. Having emergency equipment stored in separate locations reduces operational efficiency.

5. **Construction of a North Rim wildland fire facility.** This facility would consist of a 5,300 square-foot space for housing a fire crew, 1,800 square feet of offices, a 2,800 square-foot space for a fire engine, and space for a helibase, fire cache, and storage for hazardous materials.

The existing housing facilities for the fire crew does not meet NPS standards. The fire crew now stays in old cabins that are uninsulated and are rodent infested, or in tent frames in locations that often experience below freezing temperatures during the times they are in use. The wildland fire engine also must park outside, which increases maintenance costs and reduces the availability of the engine to respond to fires. There is also insufficient space for offices and for storage of equipment and supplies.

- 6. Construction of restrooms.** This project would construct or repair and rehabilitate restrooms at Cape Royal, Point Imperial, Widforss Trailhead, North Kaibab Trailhead, and Torowep Overlook. Restrooms would be a combination of flush, vault, or composting configurations depending upon the availability of water and sewer connections and the level of use.

Many of the existing restrooms are old, overused, do not meet accessibility requirement, or are portable toilets. The poor condition or lack of sufficient restrooms is the primary visitor complaint for the park. In some areas, the restrooms are in such demand or poor condition that many visitors prefer to use the woods, resulting in unsafe and unsanitary conditions.

- 7. Rehabilitation of old landfills.** This project would rehabilitate two old landfills at Marble Flats and Lindberg Hill areas. This would entail capping of the landfills, establishing run-off controls, and installation of monitoring wells to properly close the landfills in accordance with state and federal regulations.

The two existing landfills are inactive solid waste landfills closed in 1991. Neither landfill was properly closed. The Park is currently in violation of state and federal regulations. This project is needed to comply with terms of a consent order.

- 8. Construction of a new North Rim Visitor Services/Administration Building.** This project would demolish the existing visitor services/administrative building and construct a larger 2,467 square foot building near the same site. The new building would support the North Rim backcountry permit system, visitor contact services, public restroom and administrative offices. Various building designs are being considered in order for the building to be compatible with the adjacent cultural landscape and the historic district, while still accommodating the administrative and visitor needs of the building. The proposed new building layout would include a 15-car, 2-RV parking area, concrete walkways and a new access road to the parking area from the main road. Most of the ground disturbance would be in areas already disturbed (i.e. the existing building footprint) or open areas. Tree removal will primarily be limited to the entrance road. The parking area would be configured as a loop to allow for easy ingress and egress of vehicles, while maintaining existing ground cover and trees in the center. The proposed building and parking area would be located near the footprint of the original Headquarters building and between existing residential areas. The current road access to the existing visitor services/administrative building would no longer be used by visitors and would be restricted to residential and administrative use.

This project is needed to address the following management concerns: The existing visitor services/administrative building for the North Rim District replaced the original building that

was destroyed by fire in 1983. The current building is a temporary pre-manufactured structure installed in 1984. It has deteriorated from the effects of heavy snows and snowmelt for which the structure was not designed. The location of the current building is not conducive to the increased volume of traffic that has occurred within the Park and has created traffic and parking congestion within an otherwise primarily residential area. The existing building is also not of sufficient size to fully accommodate the increasing administrative needs of the North Rim Unit.

The purpose of this scoping letter is to describe the initial proposed actions for these projects and solicit comments from those who may have issues or concerns with the proposals. We would like your comments before we proceed further with the environmental analyses for these projects. If you have issues or concerns with any of the specific projects described above, please send your comments by January 8, 2001 to:

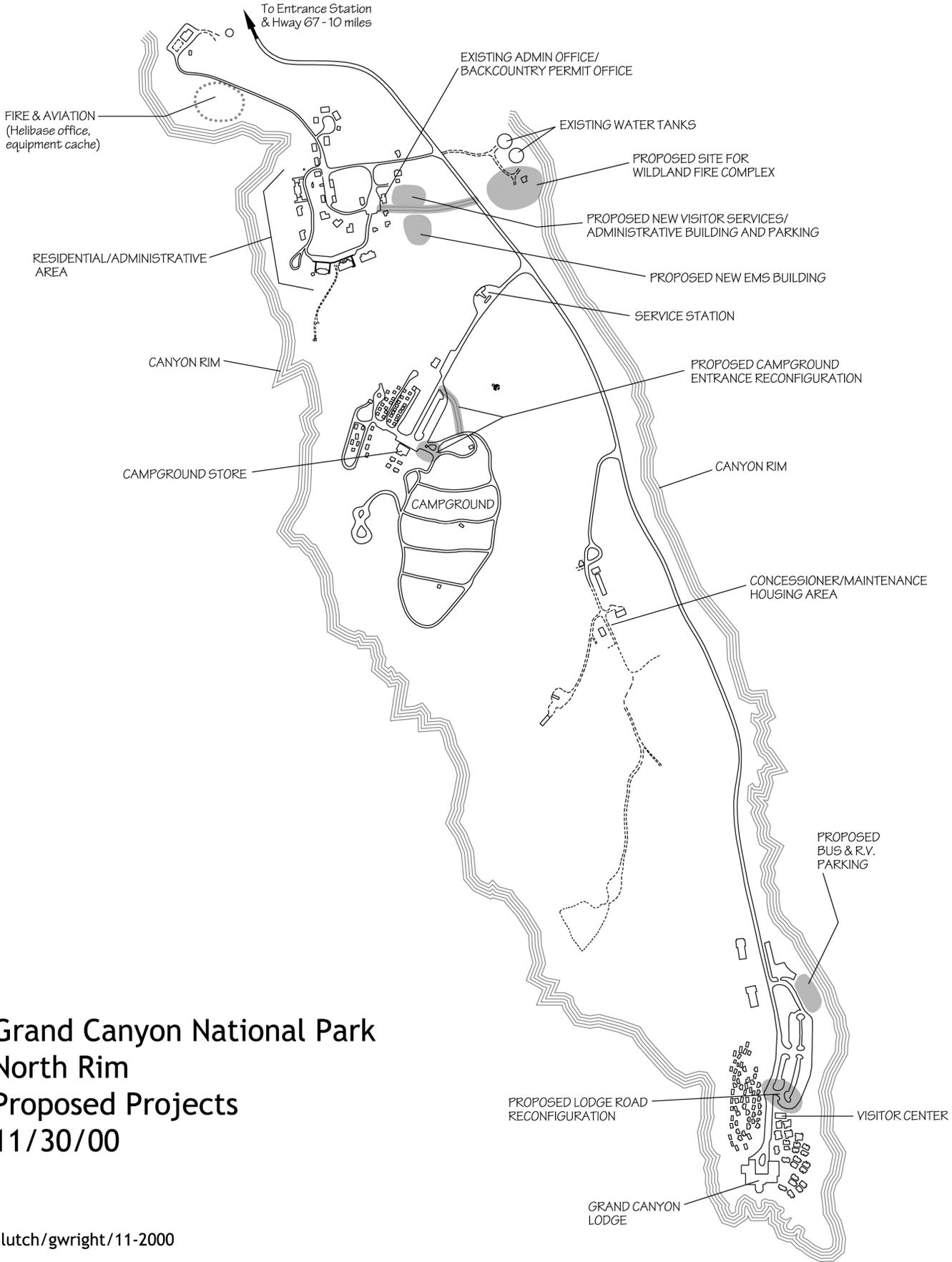
Sara White, Chief Compliance Officer
Grand Canyon National Park
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Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Anonymous comments may be included in the public record. However, the National Park Service is not legally required to consider or respond to anonymous comments.

If you have any questions regarding the projects, please call Sara White at 520-638-7956.

Sincerely,

Joseph Alston
Acting Superintendent



**Grand Canyon National Park
North Rim
Proposed Projects
11/30/00**